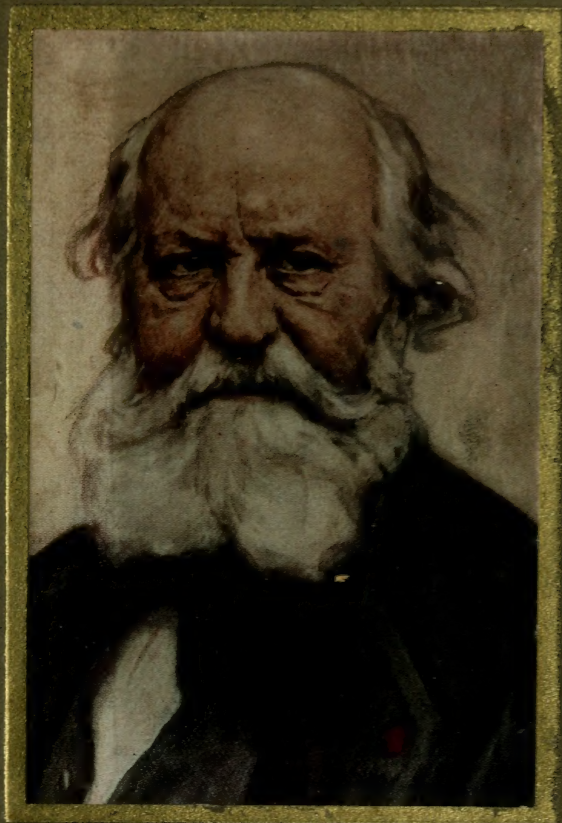


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# GOUNOD



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DAYS WITH THE  
COMPOSERS



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Edgar Samuel Bull  
Christmas 1934





DAYS WITH  
THE GREAT  
COMPOSERS

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GOUNOD



A DAY WITH GOUNOD

QUAND TU CHANTES.

“ On thy singing thou bearest  
Lovely visions of yore,—  
Sing on, sing on, my fairest,  
Sing on for evermore ! ”

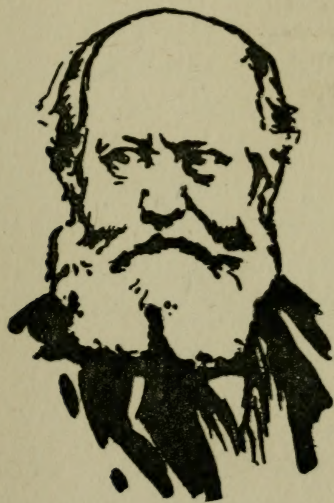
*(Sérénade.)*







A · DAY · WITH  
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BY MAY BYRON



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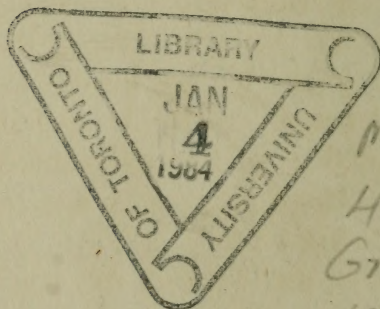
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**DAYS WITH THE COMPOSERS**

BEETHOVEN  
CHOPIN  
GOUNOD  
MENDELSSOHN  
TSCHAIKOVSKY  
WAGNER

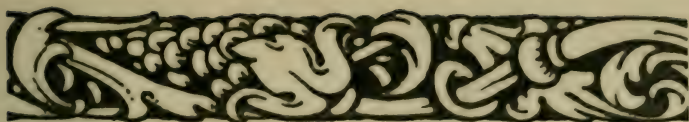
**DAYS WITH THE POETS**

BROWNING  
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## A DAY WITH CHARLES GOUNOD

**I**F, some winter morning, in the year 1888, one should have arrived at the corner of the Boulevard Malesherbes in Paris, he would recognise, in the "elegant Renaissance frontage" of a three-story building, a house which might justly have been termed the Hôtel Gounod. For the great composer's married daughter occupies the ground-floor, his sister-in-law the first floor; his married son Jean resides upon the third; and the second floor is the dwelling of Charles Gounod himself, that hale and hearty septuagenarian, whom all Paris delights to honour.

It is possible that some of this honour might be conveniently abrogated,—with advantage to the maestro himself; for it means, as we shall see, a perpetual claim upon his time and attention, a series of demands calculated to outwear the most robust good-nature. When the visitor has ascended the staircases of carved dark oak, with their medallions of composers adorning the cornice,



## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

with their rich dark Eastern carpets and curtained doorways, giving desultory glimpses of ideally-refined rooms,—when he has passed through the winter-garden with its flowers and palms, and at length arrived at the *étage* of the great musician, he will not be kept one moment without the door. However deeply occupied Charles Gounod may be, the visitor must not suffer in consequence. He has often declared that he will lock and bolt his door; but it still stands wide to all comers; and the guest is immediately welcomed into the immense apartment, two floors in height, which is the master's work-room, study, library, reception-room in one. Panelled and vaulted with oak,—lighted by broad stained-glass windows,—plentifully furnished with Persian rugs, low easy chairs, small antique tables, divans and sofas of the most alluring; adorned with carved mantles, statuettes, paintings and *objets d'art*; there certainly never was a more desirable apartment, nor one better adapted for the fulfilment of its various purposes. A large organ dominates it: a Pleyel grand piano seems to take up no space at all. A writing-table fitted with a moveable keyboard is the chief *habitat* of the composer: one side of the room is taken up with book-cases, containing not only musical

scores, which might reasonably be expected, but innumerable works on theology and philosophy, and the writings of the ancient fathers of the Church. "An indefinable atmosphere of warmth, tenderness, and trust" pervades all things; and among these evidences of comfort, well-being, art, and a liberal education, the tall old man, in his black velvet cap and black velvet smoking-jacket, comes forward with his cordial, friendly air: he receives the stranger as though a friend of long standing; one is put at ease instantly.

A fine man, this Gounod. Quick and lithe of movement, full of graceful gesticulation,—flexible and alert, both of mind and body. His eyes are a clear, calm blue,—his face full of expression; his fair beard is slightly frosted, his manner simple and easy. And, surveying him as he stands amongst his luxurious possessions, himself so fit, so sane, so successful, one thinks, with a pang of comparison, of Beethoven and his three-legged chairs . . . . of Schubert and his dingy lodging . . . . Times indeed have changed since then! Instead of the somewhat squalid, hermit-like existence of those great geniuses, in their back streets of Vienna,—shy, reserved men with whom the times were always out of

## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

joint,—here is a composer idolised by the public, besieged by troops of callers, absolutely pestered by society and society's claims. "Nowadays," Gounod himself has exclaimed with conviction, "nowadays, the artist is nowhere his own master. He belongs to the world at large. He is worse than its target. He is its prey. His own personal life is almost entirely absorbed, swamped, squandered in his so-called social obligations . . . . And once we begin to tot up the amount of time levied on the artist's working hours, by the constantly increasing number of small calls struggling and fighting for his attention all day long, it is to be wondered how, by what extra activity, what effort of concentration, he contrives to perform his chief duty."

Moreover, former composers, such as the above-named, have "scorned delights and lived laborious days" of indefatigable, solitary toil,—their work wrought out at red-heat upon the anvil of the brain,—the artist a very music-smith for the moment, welding his mighty harmonies, forging his majestic melodies, like Vulcan himself in Gounod's own famous song :

So loud the heavy hammers fall,  
So red the furnace flame is glowing ;



## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

And at my will, and to my call,  
I set the mighty bellows blowing,—  
I reign at leisure, Lord of all !  
Yet from my aspect black,  
I see men shudder back,  
I hear from roof and rafter  
Re-echo mocking laughter,—  
My fate, sharp tongues do tell,  
Is merited full well !  
And from their scornful jesting,  
I hide in toil unresting,  
Or I fly  
To shelter lone,—and there, unknown,  
I watch the darkening days go by.

*(Philémon et Baucis.)*

This modern master suffers no such stress and strain. He is perfectly sincere and self-possessed in his art : he knows no violent ups and downs. He pursues the even tenor of his way, pouring forth his compositions with fluent grace, rather than wresting them with savage resolution, like Beethoven, from the Fate that guards the hidden treasures of genius. He is naïvely susceptible to praise,—he frankly rejoices

## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

and basks in it: he is extremely sensitive to adverse criticism. But these are superficial, child-like traits, characteristic of the man's inveterate youthfulness and simplicity; "his soul," as he truly avows, "looks forth from a crystal mirror." And below the surface abides an equally child-like content with himself, his achievements, and his limitations. "Success," says he comfortably, "is more the result of a certain concatenation of favourable elements and successful conditions, than a proof and criterion of the intrinsic value of a work. . . . I can trust time to allot me, like any other man, my proper place, or to cast me down if I have been unduly exalted." In short, as has been observed of him, "Gounod is a thoroughly sincere artist; he worships Bach, and adores Mozart: but he has never dreamed of being Bach or Mozart. He is Gounod, and there his ambition ends."

And, indeed, in gazing upon his comely, kindly face, and noting his attractive surroundings, it would seem a very pleasant thing to be Gounod. However much he may complain of constant interruption, and of the penalties involved in being a public idol, one realises that he rather enjoys a *souffrant* pose. He presents, at the

# A DAY WITH GOUNOD

## VULCAN'S SONG.

' So loud the heavy hammers fall,  
    So red the furnace flame is glowing ;  
And at my will, and to my call,  
    I set the mighty bellows blowing,  
        I reign at leisure, Lord of all ! ''

*(Philémon et Baucis.)*











moment, the tranquil and unruffled mien of one who has never known any serious fluctuations in his calm routine. He is able to put forth, at once and without effort, his natural power of fascination : he exercises, almost involuntarily, his singular gift of charm : and the visitor who may have entered nervous, embarrassed, uncertain of a welcome, finds himself simply overwhelmed by illimitable kindnesses. For kindness,—the desire to please, to smooth, to gratify,—is a predominant and spontaneous growth with Charles Gounod.

Gounod's friendship—and he offers no less to the veriest unknown—has “some vague quality borrowed from love, which makes it warm and luminous.” It has often been said of him that the last person he sees is the one he loves best : nor does this phrase imply the least insincerity or instability of affection : it is the direct outcome of his own desire to be loved, that desire which pervades every fibre of his being. “All love, all serenity, all youth,” he has been described, and he himself avers with enthusiasm, “Love ! I am full of it, and that is why I have crammed so much into my operas. . . . Love alone makes man. Friendship is but another form of the same feeling. Divine love is the source of all love.”

## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

Never did a more brilliant conversationalist charm the ear of a stranger. This is no half-taught visionary, knowing little or nothing beyond his special art; but a man of wide learning, a patrician to his finger-tips, a man of catholic tastes, immense reading. Fluent and vivacious, scattering a sparkling shower of brilliant metaphors,—one moment quoting Bacon, and Saint Augustine the next,—his “searching and subtle intellect, developed by sound education and constant worship of the beautiful,” delights in every problem which can yield it food for thought.

Yet one can scarcely expect to be left long in undisputed possession of so popular a personage. Somebody else—whom one naturally resents—is already at the door. “Why do you not shut your door against intruders?” Gounod was asked once: and he replied, “That is what they all tell me: only each of my advisers regards the others as intruders, and makes an exception of himself. Now, what am I to do?” And the new arrival is not one likely to be turned away, or postponed: she is a charming young vocalist, who has come in quest of advice. Naturally she aspires to be a *prima donna*: will the master give

his opinion upon her voice, her production, her dramatic intelligence? "The truth is so hard to come at!" she sighs, "one's teachers alternately scold or flatter. . . . but she has ventured to bring one or two songs." . . . . .

Gounod has often maintained that he can take the measure of singers, before they have even opened their lips. "I see it in their eyes," he declares, "one always has the voice in one's eyes." And, indubitably, the possession of a "singing face" is not one to be gainsaid. However, he is always delighted to help, to teach, to advise,—always anxious to further the novice and the beginner, whose untried steps are set upon the thorny parts of art. He seats himself without hesitation at the pianoforte, and, gently stroking the young girl's hand, with a reassuring smile, "Sing, then, my child," says he.

She places before him his own enchanting song, *Sérénade*, or *Berceuse*, as it is indifferently termed,—a setting of Victor Hugo's verses *Quand tu chantes*.

When thy song at the twilight doth flow,  
Close on my breast,



A DAY WITH GOUNOD

Dost thou hear how my heart's answer low  
    Sinks into rest ?  
On thy singing thou bearest  
    Lovely visions of yore,—  
Sing on, sing on, my fairest,  
    Sing on for evermore !

When thy smile, like the dawning of love,  
    Lights up my heart,  
And, as changeful as sunbeams above,  
    Swift doth depart,  
Ah ! the joy that thou wearest  
    Shall be ne'er clouded o'er !  
Laugh on, laugh on, my fairest,  
    Laugh on for evermore !

When thy sleep, in the wood-shadows green,  
    Charmeth my eyes,—  
When thy breathings, like music serene,  
    Softly arise,  
To thy beauty the rarest,  
    All my homage I pour,—  
Sleep on, sleep on, my fairest,  
    Sleep on for evermore !

“ Sweetly sung, *chère enfant*,” says the maestro,

giving her an approving pat on the shoulder, "but you have much to learn. Your diction is at fault,—muffled and indistinct. You must not set yourself to produce certain mysterious sounds on certain notes, and call them singing: the words, which inspire the music, must first be audible. Lyric sound is finest when it is most akin to speech. Pure diction is the first law of song. The purely vocal sound, however beautiful, requires to be varied by the *word*, which alone gives expression, dramatic feeling, warmth and life. And, above all, no sentiment, I beg of you. Meaning, expression, significance—but not sentimentality."

This excellent advice is somewhat beyond the comprehension of the little novice: and she replies, with hesitation, "Dear master, I am desolated that I do not quite understand your meaning! Pity my stupidity: but these things have never been said to me before." The composer, with kindly patience, expounds his meaning in simpler phrases; and, to exemplify it, sings the song over again himself, in a sweet *passé* tenor voice: it hardly carries beyond the pianoforte, yet it is full of expression and emotion. "And now, *ma petite*," says he, "go home, and study, study, study. But not necessarily the trivial

## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

*chansons* of Charles Gounod. Devote yourself to an endeavour to render the immortal music of Mozart. I tell you, *Don Giovanni* is my musical gospel, and I preach it in season and out of season to everybody."

The young *cantatrice* is heard to mumble under her breath that she very much prefers *Faust* to *Don Giovanni*. Gounod is patently pleased with this artless flattery. No one has ever known, better than he, the intoxication and delight of popular adulation; but nevertheless he accepts this new homage, even in the very act of shaking his head and deprecating it . . .

"And I have studied *Faust* very hard, very hard indeed," continues the girl, producing her well-worn vocal score. "In the solo, it may be confessed, I was nervous,—I did not do myself justice—but if you would hear me in the Garden Scene,—in truth, Monsieur Gounod, I believe you would think less poorly of me."

"It is hardly fair, my child," says he, "that I should be your colleague in this scene,—I, old, grizzled, with my voice that is but an echo of its past. You need some younger man with whom to render that intense and passionate scene: one whom you could truly imagine to be Faust. Other-



wise, how shall you throw the necessary ardour into your part? If the singer do not infuse some personal feeling into the song, neither the natural qualities of her voice, nor her acquired technical knowledge, will enable her to thrill her hearers,—no matter how beautiful may be the phrases she is rendering. But what do I see! The very man we are in want of! My friend, I salute you!” And the vivacious maestro suits the action to the word, springing up and embracing his new guest,—a well-known tenor of the Opéra, who enters with the assured ease of a familiar visitor.

It does not require much persuasion for this experienced vocalist to unite his voice with that of the charming little soprano, and the vast room is shortly filled with the surging, swaying melodies of the Garden Duet from *Faust*.

(*Faust*)

Yet awhile, yet awhile,  
 Let me stay, let me view thee,  
     Let me gaze on thy lovely form!  
 From yon blue sky above,  
 How bright the star of love  
     Pours its throbbing glances to thee,  
     Those glances long and warm!

A DAY WITH GOUNOD

*(Margherita)*

O, how still ! O, how strange  
Are the mysteries that bind me !  
New delight, like a magic spell,  
    Sets my soul aglow :  
My thoughts, so calm of yore,  
    Through golden raptures range,—  
Sweet enchantments now enwind me—  
    O tell me, why do I tremble so ? . . . .

*(Faust)*

By yonder night, all starry bright,  
    Glimmering o'er thee,  
By the joy deep and divine  
That makes thee mine,  
    I love thee, I adore thee !

*(Margherita)*

Speak, let me hear  
That thou art near,—  
Leave me never,  
For I am thine, thine for ever,—  
    Yes, I would die for thee !

*(Faust.)*

## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

### FAUST AND MARGHERITA IN THE GARDEN.

“ Yet awhile, yet awhile,  
Let me stay, let me view thee,  
Let me gaze on thy lovely form !  
From yon blue sky above,  
How bright the star of love  
Pours its throbbing glances to thee,  
Those glances long and warm ! ”

*(Faust.)*









## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

One feels, in listening to these entrancing and voluptuous strains, that no composer has ever before voiced earthly love with such perfection: they are, like Milton's definition of true poetry, "simple, sensuous, and impassioned," and instinct with a wealth of pure melody, such as in these days of declamatory music is to be met with less and less. Many musicians have essayed the story of *Faust*; for the subject, with its commingling of the poignantly human and the weirdly supernatural, is one that appeals to all. Spohr has treated it conscientiously; Berlioz fantastically; Schumann with deep, mystical intuition. Rossini, and even Beethoven, had each contemplated, but never carried out, a superlative *Faust* of his own, which should be his *magnum opus* and eclipse all else that he had done. But for Gounod it was reserved to create a work which should be the most popular opera of the century: and which, if it does not stand on the same lofty plane, the same stern psychological altitude, as the great dramatic *Faust* of Goethe from which all these others are derived, yet has a charm, an *esprit*, a plenitude of beautiful detail, which render it a very garden of delights.

Strange to say, Gounod's *Faust* was not a



## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

success at first: the music was considered almost revolutionary; the scenes were too unusual in their defiance of the conventional Italian-opera-traditions. "Nothing but noise," the critics declared . . . "No unity in book or score . . . Devoid of any inspiration," etc., etc. But, slowly and surely, the various numbers "caught on" with the capricious public: beginning, as usual, with the least artistic. First, the *Soldiers' Chorus*, that inspiriting march, full of *verve* and *entrain*, seized the popular fancy; then the Waltz, gay, melodious, fascinating; the Garden Duet soon won its first appreciation,—presently the various solos were recognised as each a masterpiece in its way, exactly expressive of the situation and character, admirably written from the vocalist's point of view: and so on, until *Faust* in its entirety became a name to conjure with, acceptable to every audience and in every country of Europe.

One questions the veteran composer of the reasons for this tardy fame: and he replies that the public are slow to welcome the unknown. "Every artist," says he, "is the issue from those who preceded him: but that does not imply that he imitates them . . . In the collaboration of the artist with nature, it is his own personal emotion

which gives his work its original character . . . To pass from interior and tangible realities to emotion, and from emotion to reason, is the progressive march of intellectual development. And this," continues Gounod, warming to his subject, "is admirably summed up by St. Augustine in one of the luminous and concise formulæ with which his works abound. Have you read St. Augustine's *De Musica*? No? Nor his *De Civitate Dei*? No? Nor his *Confessions*? My friend, I counsel you to study this great author,—my favourite of all others—you will learn inconceivably much . . . . Well, St. Augustine, as I was saying, puts the matter in a nutshell. *De exterioribus ad interiora ; de interioribus ad superiora* : From outside to inside, from inside to on high. That is the career of art."

"Dear master, you become too learned for me," says the young girl, emboldened by her success in the *Nuit d'amour* duet. "How should one learn to sing, *par exemple*, by studying these austere old books?"

"Far more," retorts the master, "than by confining oneself to *chansons* and *solfeggi*. What! shall one nourish half one's artistic propensities,

and leave the rest to starve? A man—or a woman—should not be lop-sided, but all-round, in his mental equipment, and in his power to appreciate the “fair and fit.” I insist emphatically, that a student of music should not only regard the particular modes of expression proper to his own art, but also great paintings, great poems, great sculptures, all the masterpieces of human thought. Go to Phidias,—to Michelangelo,—to Dante,—to Shakespeare.”

“But all this is not music,” objects the tenor.

“Music! no, it is not music!” exclaims Gounod, “but it is art—ancient and modern art, immortal and universal art: and from it the *artist*—not the mere *artisan*,—must derive his sustenance, draw his strength, his ideas, and his life! It is impossible to communicate genius, because genius is not transferable—it is an essentially personal gift. But what *is* transferable is the language by which genius manifests itself, without which it is dumb and helpless. . . . I tell you, my friends, unless one puts himself *au fait* with every dialect of that language, he runs the risk of being dumb and helpless himself.”

Gounod is notoriously fond of harping upon this subject,—the development of the artist rather

than the virtuoso. In him, however, as in so many other great composers, the artist has been present from the very outset,—although he has not, on that account, neglected technical equipment. “Inspiration and counterpoint,” in his own words, “are all the needful baggage of a musician.” Musical genius is seldom long in making its presence perceptible; its “trailing clouds of glory” are circumambient round the soul in very infancy. And Gounod loves to record, for the benefit of those young folk whom he delights to help forward, how his whole artistic career was influenced and determined by “three musical shocks,” as he calls them. The first occurred when he was only six years old: it was a performance of Weber’s *Der Freischütz*. The impressive scenes, the supernatural effects, together with the beauty and exhilaration of the music, took a strong hold of his infant imagination, already predisposed to receive such effects: the opera had a distinct bearing henceforth upon his childish thoughts. The second “shock” was experienced at twelve years of age,—when, having been awarded an extra school holiday for good conduct, he went to hear Rossini’s *Otello*, with Malibran as Desdemona. And the schoolboy was aware of his “true artist’s soul vibrating to



the passionate notes of the incomparable Malibran, —. . . the dramatic appeal of a golden voice,” which stirred the very depth of his nascent ambition. “If the time should only come,” he dreamed, “when I can write an opera for *her*!” And from this time on he was possessed by a feverish longing to end his classical studies and devote himself to music. He was not quite fourteen when the third “shock” settled the question of his calling once and for ever: when, on hearing *Don Giovanni*, “his whole artistic temperament was galvanised into irresistible ardour” . . . “You seem very fond of that music,” his mother remarked on his return from the opera. “Oh! mother, it is not *that* music,—it is *Music*!” Mozart, henceforth, was installed as the chief object of his idolatry. “All the conditions of art,” he has declared, “are united in *Don Giovanni*. . . . Does it not contain, together with the exquisite and incomparable charm of pure music, the most complete and constant expression of living truth, of human truth,—and consequently all the psychological force that can be required of a drama? . . . When I was very young, I used to say ‘I’—later on I said ‘*I and Mozart* ;’ then ‘*Mozart and I* ;’ and now I say, ‘*Mozart*.’ Who

has run through the great gamut of human passions as he has done? . . . Oh! divine Mozart! Hast thou reposed in the bosom of infinite Beauty? Prodigal Fortune has given thee all . . . and has made of thee the unexcelled musician."

And now he repeats, with zest, the well-known anecdote about Rossini: who, being asked whom he considered the first of musicians, replied at once, "Beethoven." "What about Mozart?" he was questioned. "Oh, Mozart," said Rossini, "he is not the first,—he is the only one!"

"Still indulging in Mozart-worship, Monsieur?" says a laughing voice: and the old man turns to greet his librettist, Jules Barbier, "a personality eminently Parisian,"—tall, handsome, fair, blue-eyed, animated. And it is then to be seen that quite a small crowd of strangers have joined the original handful of folk. They have crept into the great room, unannounced and unnoticed, under the flow of the master's eloquence. Here a violinist, carrying his case,—there a young pianist with a music-roll: a composer hugging his MS.—a lyric-writer with a sheaf of songs,—a teacher of singing who is exploiting some new method,—a lady autograph-hunter,—there they all are, each desirous to interview the master alone,

## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

and not knowing how to set about it. Severally and singly they introduce themselves : and none can boast of being distinguished above the others. With adroit amiability, and a real desire to be of use,—with youthful *élan* and vivacity, Gounod encounters each applicant in turn, and meets, as far as possible, the wishes of all. He patiently listens to a rendering, by some crude half-fledged contralto, of the lovely Goatherd's-Song from *Sappho*, that Arcadian melody "thyme-and-lavender-scented like an idyll of Theocritus" : he hears some budding baritone attempt an excerpt from "that delicately-carved jewel set with many precious stones," *Philémon et Baucis*. To the various claimants on his good nature he lends a sympathetic ear,—not one goes away disappointed. Finally, with a sigh of relief, it must be confessed, he sees the last intruder disappear : and, with Jules Barbier, snatches a brief leisure for the luncheon-hour : for even famous composers must be fed.

And now a little time is allowed him, wherein to assert his own individuality,—to "meditate," as he puts it, "before the altar of one's soul,—one's glance turned inward : that is in what true labour consists. . . . These folk," he complains

# A DAY WITH GOUNOD

## THE JEWEL SONG IN "FAUST."

" Ah ! . . . . . how bright  
And fair they sparkle on my sight ! . . . .  
Look ! how clear they shine !  
Necklace white, bracelet bright !  
And all are mine ! "

*(Faust.)*









to Barbier, "who come and waste and fritter away one's days without the slightest scruple, they don't know what one's work means. They say, 'Musical composition is such an easy thing! It is not a matter of work. It comes of itself: it is an inspiration!' I wish they could realise what it *does* mean!" says he, shrugging his shoulders as he regards the half-finished scores, the publishers' letters, the proofs demanding instant attention. And before he can devote himself to these, the master must needs attend to some portion of his huge correspondence. Constantly importuned to be present at concerts, festivals, rehearsals: continually implored to conduct performances of his works: begged for letters of introduction, for interviews, for advice, for lectures,—it is almost impossible for him to cope single-handed with the wearisome piles of letters. Nothing but his unfailing good-temper and patience could ever carry him through.

A tithe of these importunate missives disposed of, Gounod is at last alone and free. He spends some precious time in the composition of sacred music, a class of work particularly near and dear to him, though it may be questioned whether it is the branch of art in which he is most successful.



In youth he studied theology earnestly, believing himself called to the priesthood: he was even known for a while as the Abbé Gounod: and although he eventually turned his steps into more secular paths, the influence of this early theological training has unmistakably remained with him. It is evidenced not only in his preference of serious and philosophical subjects of discourse, but in his *penchant* for composing religious works. Canticles, hymns, masses, oratorios, and other forms of church music without number, in turn have emanated from his prolific brain: sometimes treated in a modern spirit, sometimes as a deliberate following of the antique style, a resuscitation of the method of Palestrina, "impersonal, mystical, majestic." "When Christ entered Jerusalem," says Gounod, "He said that if men should be silent, the stones would immediately cry out,—*lapides clamabunt*. Well, a choral mass must symbolise these words; it must be an edifice, a stone, austere, grave, massive, and solemn."

Nor does he consider this in any sense a retrograde movement towards earlier forms of art. "One is eternally speaking," he avers, "of the progress of art; the expression is unmeaning.

The artist may progress in his art ; but art itself does not. Art is not like science, whose domain ranges over successive and accumulative discoveries of the laws of nature. Art rests on two elements, ever and always the same,—an instinct or sensibility, whence proceed emotion and expression,—and a technical knowledge susceptible of growth, but in the *individual*, not the *art*."

Moreover, Gounod is a sincere Christian believer,—liberal, tolerant, enlightened. "Every one of his religious compositions," it has been said, "is a confession of faith . . . he aims at being an apostle as well as an artist." He himself selects his words from the Scriptures : and in the oratorio, *The Redemption*, his avowed aim was "to present," as he expressed it, under a lyric form, "the three great facts on which the existence of the Christian Church depends ; . . . the Passion and death of the Saviour : His glorious life on earth from His Resurrection to His Ascension : and the spread of Christianity through the teaching of the Apostles."

Yet, as a believer, he has patience with "honest doubt ;" the more so, that being "certain of what he knows, he does not care what he does

not know." He declares himself equally certain of knowing that too, some day, "when I shall behold the spring of all love, of all devotion . . . when I shall be clothed in the garments of the beautiful, the true, and the good : when I shall share in the final and universal communion . . . It is therefore I can preach patience," he once assured a doubter, "because I am far nearer the dawn than you are : but it will come, never fear. Everything will be explained then : light will dawn on all things."

And now, as he sits absorbed in thought, his fine face ennobled by elevated aims, one can understand to some extent how far he is influenced by his own subtle and suggestive teaching,—  
 "Art is one of the three incarnations of the ideal in the real ; one of the three operations of that Spirit which is to renew the face of the earth ; one of the three revivals of Nature in man ; one of the three forms, in a word, of that principle of separate immortality which constitutes the perpetual resurrection of humanity at large, by virtue of its three creative powers, distinct in function, though practically identical : *viz.*,—Love, the essence of human life : Science, the essence of truth : and Art, the essence of beauty."

But now he rises to receive a welcome visitor, Madame Miolhan-Carvalho, the original exponent of his *Margherita*. An inordinately thin woman, with an inordinately thin reedy voice, which, to quote the hypercritical, "broke in half in the middle and had four notes missing," this Madame Miolhan, by energy and perseverance, has transformed her meagre vocal endowment into a thing of flexibility and charm : so that even the exigent composer himself could hardly desire a better performance than she could give of his brilliant soprano air, the Jewel Song.

The *Faust* music has been termed the half-way house between the classical and popular styles : but undoubtedly, for sheer embodiment of innocent and girlish joy, few composers have surpassed the elation, animation, and *brio* of the Jewel Song. We can see, without stage effects, the immeasurable gratification of Margherita, as she trills her long-drawn note of wonder and surprise .

Ah ! . . . . . how bright  
 And fair they sparkle on my sight !  
 Ah ! but now  
 I am transformed, I know not how !



## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

Breast and brow,—Margherita,  
Is it thou? Tell me now,  
Mirror, mirror, tell me truly!  
No, no! this is not thou,  
Glowing and gleaming so newly,  
'Tis a royal princess,  
Some King's daughter, no less,—  
This is not thou, this is not thou,  
To whom monarchs shall bow,  
And their homage shall render,  
Ah! but might it only be  
He were here to look on me!

Clad in such beauty rare now,  
Would he not find me fair now?  
Decked in all this royal splendour,  
He, too, would homage render! . . .  
. . . Here are more gems for my adorning,  
Look! how clear they shine!  
Necklace white, bracelet bright,  
And all are mine!  
Heav'ns! how heavy their weight,  
Glistening like stars of the morning!  
Ah! I laugh to see myself in such array!

Ah ! behold, I am fairer than the day !

Clad in such beauty rare now,

Would he not call me fair now ?

(*Faust.*)

Other friends and relatives are entering one by one, and the master's grandchildren are nestling happily against his knee, while he discourses and disserts upon musical matters, with all the enthusiasm of a lad of twenty. He discusses the bizarre genius of Berlioz, "who was one of the greatest emotional influences of my youth," says he, "though he is so no longer"; he bestows cordial and honest praise upon Saint-Saëns. He speaks with fervent respect of Sebastian Bach,— "The whole of music is in that man !" He dwells with lingering pleasure on the names of Palestrina, Weber, Beethoven, "the Michelangelo of music,"—of Glück, whose art he compares to "antique statuary, with its noble and pure lines,"—of Rossini, the varied and prolific Italian. . . . His vast erudition is lost sight of in his picturesque eloquence : and however strong his prejudices in affairs of art, he makes obvious endeavour to repress them in passing judgment upon con-

temporary composers. Yet it cannot be concealed that the so-called "Music-of-the-Future" is abhorrent to his lyrical soul,—and that if his benevolent heart has one *bête noir*, it is Richard Wagner. His friends, with sly maliciousness, attempt to draw him out on this subject : at first in vain. "I know what I think," growls Gounod, "but I would rather not say it. . . . We won't discuss him" . . . . But presently, rising to carefully-thrown bait, "Wagner," says he, "has not the stature of his brain qualities. He is a visionary haunted by the colossal."

Then, on being reminded that he himself has generously written articles in praise and defence of the much-abused Wagner, he allows that "One cannot see a man attacked, vituperated, denied a hearing, without saying a word in his favour. The *camaraderie* of art, its *esprit de corps*, would demand as much of a fellow-musician. Besides, there are many who are his devout adherents—though I myself am scarcely to be numbered amongst them . . . . Ah ! my friends, believe me, art is happiness : but I derive none from that tortured music of to-day, which pretends to be the last word in modernity. It is not a fountain flowing clear and free,—it is not grace

## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

### THE BALCONY SCENE IN "ROMEO ET JULIETTE."

" Parting from thee is grown so sweet a sorrow,  
I could repeat my fond good-night,  
Again, and still again, until the morrow  
With rosy ray shall spring to sight ! "

*(Roméo et Juliette.)*









and beauty, it is not love. These new musicians have talent,—enormous talent,—any amount of talent you like ; but they have never knelt before anything, neither before plastic beauty, nor eternal love : neither before the masters, nor before God.”

“ At least,” ventures one of his hearers, “ it is interesting to watch the development of these new ideas, to hazard a guess as to where such byways of revolt may lead. And, if only from mere novelty, the music of which we speak is interesting—its declamatory treatment of the voice, its extraordinary usage of the orchestra.”

“ Heaven preserve us from interesting music ! ” ejaculates the master. “ Music must be fine—that is quite enough. . . . I may be wrong ”—he suddenly modifies his heated tone to one of perfect calm, in the manner of which he alone possesses the secret,—“ I may be wrong, but at any rate my music is *mine*, it is my flesh, my blood, my bones. If it is liked, that is because it is true, sincere, living. If it be lacking in other, perhaps greater, qualities,—well, it is undeniably so : that is something : an open want is no less creditable than an obvious possession to a man who values truth, and is as his Creator made him.



But come, my friends, I do not want to be interesting, I want to be loved : *voilà tout*. I am seventy : yet I have never so fully understood the intensity of Love, which is supposed to be *par excellence* the feeling of youth. If I were a painter I know that I should make a faithful portrait of Love, because I have an inward vision, an intuition of it,—because I am constantly in contact with Love, in its purest and noblest sense,—because I have been able, in my operas, to find a free outlet for it.” And he expounds and explains how his pre-eminently lyrical faculty has expressed all phases of Love. The desperate and heart-broken *Sappho*, the imperial *Reine de Saba*, the tender sweetness of *Mireille*, are contrasted by him with the delineation of sacred love where the worshippers, kings and shepherds, kneel adoring by the manger of *Bethlehem*,—with the heart-felt devotion of the *Ave Maria* skilfully educed from Bach’s first Prelude. He points out how the boyish love of Siebel, embodied in *Le parlate d’amor*, is surpassed by the man’s mature emotion of *Salve dimora* : he contrasts, again, Valentine’s brotherly affection with the lingering avowal of Margherita, shy and slow as befits a maid of Northern Europe : whereas in *Roméo et*

*Juliette* all the ardour of the South flings the lovers, almost at first sight, into each other's arms.

"Never," his hearers agree, "never has a more marvellous, more spontaneous hymn of love exhaled, than the duet *de l'Alouette* in Juliette's room."

"There are three great duets in *Roméo*," interjects Madame Miolhan-Carvalho, "and I who speak have never been able to decide which was the most entrancing. For which could one choose,—the *Alouette*,—or the great and tragic final duo in Juliette's sepulchre—or that inexpressibly lovely farewell, in which smiles and tears are mingled, when *Roméo*, in a frenzy of passion, throws a kiss across the divine chant of the violins?"

"Let us hear it," is the simultaneous demand,—and, the songstress selecting a suitable *Roméo*, that magical duet begins:

(*Roméo*)

Night all celestial ! I implore thee,  
 Leave thou my soul in this dream of  
 delight !

I fear lest I may wake, and find once more  
 the

Cold reality of morning light

A DAY WITH GOUNOD

(*Juliette*)

Roméo !

Speak, my dearest !

But one word—then farewell :

For till the dawn thou must not bide,—

Tell me truly, dost thou seek me for  
thy bride ?

. . . . .

(*Roméo*)

Stay but a little longer ;

Leave me not here forsaken,

Dearest, let but thy hand

Linger softly in mine !

(*Juliette*)

Nay, for the light is stronger,—

Soon all the world will waken,—

Dearest, now let my hand

Loose itself out of thine !

Adieu ! adieu !

(Both)

Parting from thee is grown so sweet a sorrow,  
 I could repeat my fond good-night,  
 Again, and still again, until the morrow  
 With rosy ray shall spring to sight !  
 Farewell, my love, until the morrow's light !

“ *Adieu, adieu ! the plaintive anthem fades* ” into Roméo's impassioned solo, alone beneath the balcony. The very air of Italy, warm, fragrant, exquisite, fills the Parisian room, as the music trembles into silence. Divested of all stage accessories, all appurtenances of extraneous sight and sound, its enchanting phrases have shone out in their authentic sweetness, “ beauty unadorned adorned the most.” One fears even to draw a sigh of admiration, lest the brooding echoes should be jarred.

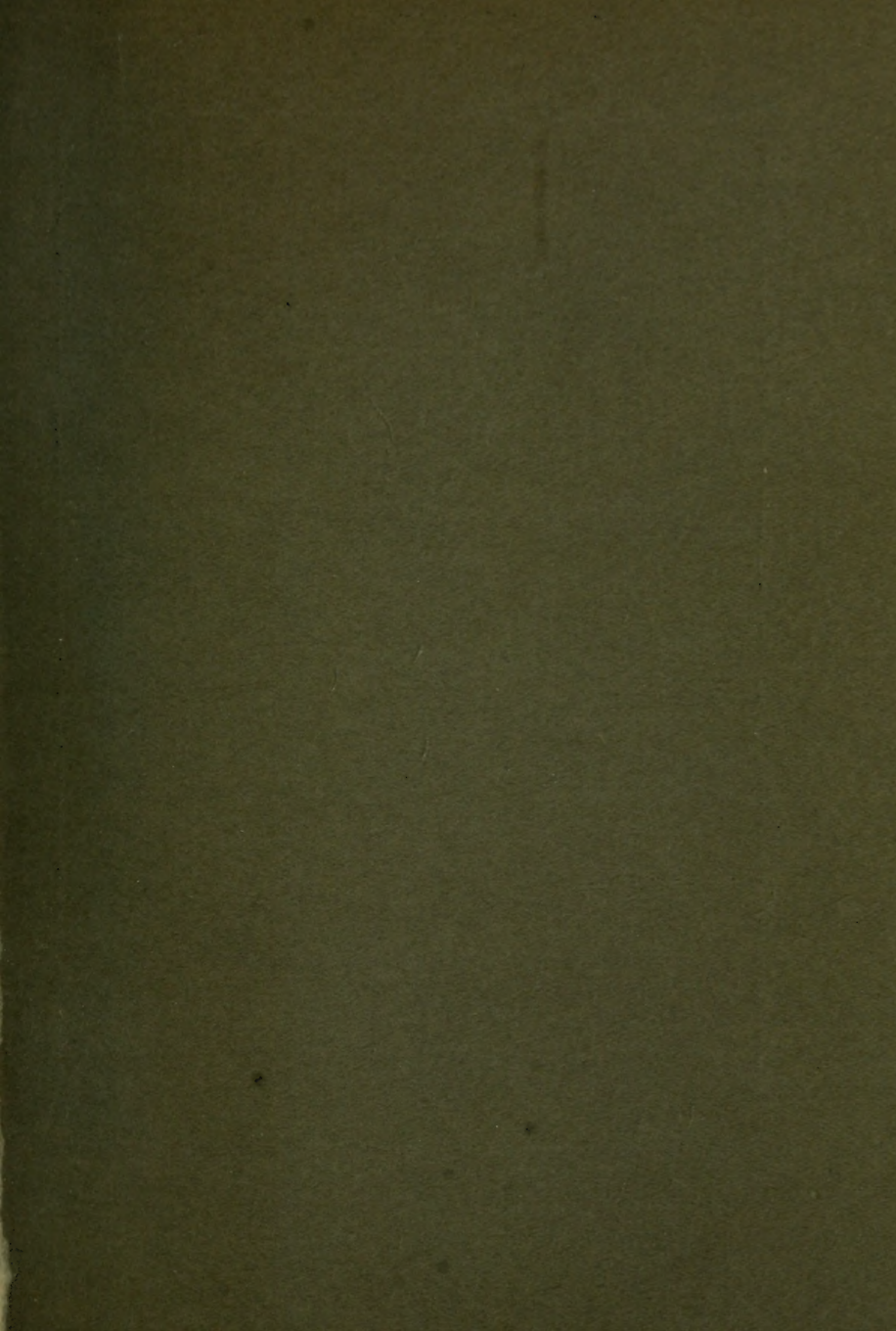
In a silence almost reverent, the guests disperse themselves : the master, lost in a dream of love and loveliness, sits solitary in his easy chair. All too soon the outer world will again make urgent claim upon him : for he must spend the whole evening in social functions whence there is no escape, and will literally not have a



## A DAY WITH GOUNOD

moment to call his own. But now as the winter evening deepens into darkness, he remains for a little space plunged in a fathomless deep of reverie : and celestial voices call and make answer above it, like nightingales over the darkness of a mid-May wood . . . "*O ma lyre immortelle !*" he quotes in a pensive murmur to himself, "I think I have not touched thy notes in vain."









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